

English Society at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries Through the Prism of Jerome K. Jerome's writing

Bachelor Thesis

Author: Jan Stibor (AJ-ZSV)

Supervisor: PhDr. Petr Chalupský, PhD.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank PhDr. Petr Chalupský, PhD., the supervisor of my Bachelor thesis, for his patience and useful advices that I received during the writing.

Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to present Jerome Klapka Jerome's observations and remarks on the English society at the turn of the twentieth century as presented in his writing and compare them with those of other authors of his time. The theoretical part should provide historical background which is essential for better understanding of uniqueness of Jerome's comments as well as their timelessness, namely the impacts of social changes and technical development on everyday life.

Abstrakt

Cílem této práce je představit autora jménem Jerome Klapka Jerome a především jeho postřehy a poznámky o anglické společnosti přelomu devatenáctého a dvacátého století, tak jak jsou prezentovány v jeho díle. Tyto budou dále porovnány s postřehy jeho současníků. Teoretická část poskytuje historické pozadí Jeromovy doby, které je nezbytné pro ocenění jedinečnosti autorových poznatků a komentářů, stejně jako jejich nadčasovosti. Jmenovitě dopady společenských změn a technického vývoje na každodenní život.

Key Words

English society, Jerome Klapka Jerome, timelessness, predictions, 19th century

Klíčová slova

Anglická společnost, Jerome Klapka Jerome, nadčasovost, předpovědi, 19. století

Prohlášení o autorství

Předkládám k posouzení a obhajobě bakalářskou práci. Prohlašuji tímto, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně, s použitím odborné literatury a pramenů, uvedených v seznamu, který je součástí této bakalářské práce.

V Praze dne:

Podpis autora:

Table of contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	II. 1. Brief biography and social background of the author	2-3
	II. 2. From initial failures to success	4-5
	II. 3. Peculiarities in Jerome's narrative style	5-6
III.	III.1. Technical developement and its effects	
	on the society and everyday life	6-8
	III.2. Socialism	9-11
IV.	IV. 1. Major social changes towards the end	
	of the 19th century	11
	IV. 2. Leisure time activities	12
V.	V. Jerome's Satire on Socialism	13-15
VI.	The English and Other Nations	15-19
VII.	Timelessness and Predictions	20-23
VIII.	Oscar Wilde on Socialism	24-26
IX.	Robert Louis Stevenson on the English	26-29
X.	Conclusion	29-30
XI.	Works Cited	31-32

I. Introduction

Jerome Klapka Jerome is an English author of the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Although his writing oscillates between humorous short stories, social novels, and theatre plays, he is most celebrated as the author of *Three Men in a Boat*, a comic novel that has become one of the best selling books in the world. The theme of this thesis is Jerome's description of English society at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century with the objective of highlighting the parts of Jerome's writing that focus on such descriptions while offering a window into author's view of the English society of his time.

The subtask of the thesis is to show that Jerome K. Jerome was not only an excellent humorist, but a talented observer and cherished author overall. Jerome lived and wrote his works at a time which is now seen as an exciting and progressive period of history. Jerome's chronicles of his time underscores its pros and cons and offers us an untraditional, yet entertaining view of the English society at the turn of the century. Since many of the author's predictions on further societal development proved to be true in several different fields, one may safely assume that Jerome had an incredible consciousness of the society he was surrounded with. Support shall be provided for this assumption as the subtask of the main work.

The thesis is divided into two parts: a theoretical one and a practical one. The theoretical part provides a short biography of the author which is essential for a better understanding of his postulations and opinions. Another component of the theoretical part is devoted to the historical background of Klapka's time with a focus on the topics that play a crucial, and therefore extremely relevant part of his writing. The practical part of the thesis depicts concrete examples of Jerome's prose whereby English society is examined and compared to that of other countries. These remarks and keen observations are analysed and further refined. In the latter parts of the thesis, Jerome is compared and contrasted to contemporaries of his time in order to show his unparalleled uniqueness and timelessness.

In short, the main task of this thesis is to present the work of Jerome Klapka Jerome with a specific focus on his observational ability and foresight.

II. 1. Brief biography and social background of the author

The British writer and humorist was born in 1859 at Wallsall, Staffordshire to the family of a coal-mine owner, Jerome Clapp Jerome, and his wife Marguerite. The profession of young Jerome's father could lead one to the incorrect conclusion that he grew up in affluent surroundings but that is nothing close to the real conditions which Jerome had to undergo in his childhood. His father's business suffered a huge blow when all his mine shafts were flooded. This unfortunate event had a fatal impact on Jerome Clapp's business and led to a total bankruptcy of his company in 1860, when Jerome junior was only one year old. The family then moved to London which had a crucial influence on the author's future works.

Nineteenth century London was a heart of a prospering empire as well as a dismal place where the poor suffered from illnesses and hunger. Jerome was to experience the darker side of the city during his childhood. His father died early which left the family on the edge of poverty. Fortunately enough, the author gained at least some, though very basic, education by attending elementary school for four years. Later in his career, he was criticized by some for his simple, folk-like language and peculiar syntax in some of his works.

Since Jerome was only sixteen when his mother died, he had to make his own living and fend for himself. At first he worked for a railway company which he eventually left in order to pursue aspirations of becoming an actor. Nevertheless, his acting career proved to be rather unsuccessful and after some time he left the world of drama behind and searched for a regular job. He found a job at *TO-DAY* magazine, where he first worked as an editor but later began to write columns for the magazine as well as for another magazine called *The Idler*. Jerome's first steps as a journalist were rather difficult, earning him just enough to survive where he could not afford a comfortable living and forcing him to spend some time in the shantytowns of London. However, it is around this time when Jerome discovered his ability to write short prose and he even tried to publish some of his works. Many of these were denied, but he finally succeeded with *On the Stage – and Off: the Brief Career of a Would-be Actor* (1885), his first published book in which he mocked his acting experiences and the theatre in general. Soon another collection of his short stories and essays appeared under the title of *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* (1886).

At the same time, Jerome wrote several plays. Although some of them were published and performed, only one, entitled *Barbara*, gained some greater recognition. However, what did cause enormous response was his next book – *Three Men in a Boat (to Say Nothing of the Dog)*, which was published in 1889. This work gained Jerome undying fame and a great deal of money. On the other hand, it was this particular book that actually overshadowed the rest of the author's written body of work. Jerome mocks this fact with his characteristic humor in his autobiographic novel *They and I* (1909): "I was staying at a hotel in Switzerland, and the second evening a pleasant-spoken young fellow, who said he had read all my books – later he appeared surprised on learning I had written more than two – asked me if I would care to play a hundred up." Nevertheless, thanks to his successful book, Jerome could afford to travel abroad. His travelling experiences were captured in several works with *Three Men on the Bummel* (1900) being probably the most distinguished one. Jerome was very productive in the following years and wrote numerous short stories, novels and plays: Namely, *Paul Kever* (1902), a semi-autobiographic novel which gained the respect of critics and will be mentioned later on in this thesis; *Passing of the Third Floor Back* (1907), Klapka's most appreciated play that was even made into a film in 1935, and Jerome's autobiography called *My Life and Times* (1926). Although these and other books were well received by readers, none of them ever overcame the success of *Three Men in a Boat*.

A crucial moment for the author came in 1914 with the onset of World War I. Against his will, Jerome was denied the military service for England because of his advanced age. He instead joined the French Army as an ambulance driver. Unfortunately, the war had a devastating impact on him. As presented at jeromekjerome.com: "When he returned home, his secretary wrote, 'the old Jerome had gone. In his place was a stranger. He was a broken man.' "

Nevertheless, even after the dreads of war Jerome did not lose his ability to "see the humorous side of things and enjoy the fun when it comes" (Jerome, *My Life*) as he proved in his biography, as entertaining and humorous as most of his other works.

II. 2. From initial failures to success

Today, Jerome is predominantly seen as a humorist. However, in his early writings one can find a certain melancholy and sadness within. Even in his later works the comedy is often accompanied by dreamy or almost philosophical passages where sorrow plays its part. As Jerome claimed at the end of his life in his biography, *My Life and Times*: "I can see the humorous side of things and enjoy the fun when it comes, but look where I will, there seems to me always more sadness than joy in life." Jerome's most favourite and inspirational author was *Dickens*. This inspiration is obvious from the themes of Jerome's short stories, where the main protagonists are often of the lower classes and suffer from the effects of hard labour or have to deal with disfavour of fate.

Given the conditions in which he grew up, Jerome's interest in the lower classes like that of Dickens seems natural. However, Jerome's early short stories did not cause the same level of excitement as those of Charles Dickens. Jerome even spent hours and hours writing letters to *The Times*. He knew that as a single, young man he would not be taken seriously so he often gave false identities. Several of these letters were published, which encouraged him to continue his aspiration of becoming a recognised author. Although this approach could be perceived as ridiculous by some, it proves Jerome's desire and determination to succeed despite his initial lower social status.

A crucial change comes with *On the Stage – and Off*. This book is of utmost importance for Jerome's career and acts as a catalyst in many ways not only because it succeeded and sold splendidly, as remarked the author himself, but mainly because it was different than most of his previous attempts. Although Jerome did not perceive himself as a humorist he realized that his sense of humor and ability to mock things around him, including his own failures, were well received by readers. Having published his first book, he now focused on the witty side of life and its circumstances. In a discussion over Ibsen's plays he once remarked: "He (Ibsen) sees nothing, but the evil side of all things. God knows there is plenty of evil in the world. It doesn't need a genius to see it. But there is good in everything... If art is only to make life more hideous for us – if it is only to show us the evil and teach us hopelessness then art is a curse to humanity. " (Oulton)

Soon another collection of his short stories and essays appeared under the name of *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow. A book for an Idle Holiday*. Unlike his first book, *The Idle Thoughts* did not focus on a single subject, but offered a wide range of themes. Whereas in *On the Stage – and Off* Jerome not only made fun of theatrical stereotypes and immutable characters but also provided his own views, ideas and advices to improve these, his second published work is pure amusement not only for the reader, but also for the author himself. Jerome dedicated *The Idle Thoughts* to his pipe, calling it his "warmest comrade" and "very dear and beloved friend" (Jerome, *Idle Thoughts*). This opening may be seen as a hint for a reader not to take his ideas mentioned in the work too seriously. In the book Jerome presents his observations of diverse subjects from cats and dogs to weather or love. It is in this book where one can spot the development of Jerome's writing as well as his significant way of telling stories for which he was to soon become famous for.

II. 3. Peculiarities in Jerome's narrative style

When Jerome Klapka Jerome was a child his family suffered from poverty. However, although the family's financial situation was less than ideal, their overall knowledge of affairs and manners were admirable. Jerome senior was a well educated, religious man and even preached at the time the family lived in Wallsall. Jerome was therefore given a solid upbringing and knew the manners of higher classes. On the other side of the spectrum, he grew up among the working class in London. This dualism is also clearly seen and projected into his writing.

Jerome adopted both the formal style as well as the language of the uneducated. He used the latter mainly for the purpose of providing a realistic image of the people described and for a humorous effect. A good example of this technique may be found in Jerome's semi-autobiographic novel, *They and I*, where Jerome depicted his exchange with a local farmer about a cow in his yard: "I towed her rahnd last night. I didn't knock at the door and tell yer abath'er, cos, to be quite frank with yer, there wasn't anybody in." (169) However, this approach did not always meet with positive feedback. Klapka once marked himself as the best abused author in England. *The Punch* magazine referred to him as "Arry K' Arry", where "arry" was an informal term for a man of poor origin and unkempt look. Nevertheless,

Jerome proved his literary qualities in numerous emotive descriptions of scenes where his language is rich and full of imaginative similes.

Another peculiarity that occurs in some of the author's works, including the most famous one, is a certain disorderedness. Jerome always had a number of ideas and stories to tell. It is evident from some of his books that to stick to one particular theme was sometimes a rather difficult task for the author. Support for this statement may be found in Jerome's masterpiece - *Three Men in a Boat*. At the beginning of each chapter a reader can find a synopsis of the section. Klapka outlined the sub-chapters right under the main headline. While this synopsis may be seen as an useful tool for a reader, its main aim was to help the author to at least broadly stick to the subject of the story which was the journey. Jerome admitted later on that these outlines were originally his notes but that he decided to keep them in the book. The book itself has a rather plain plot, which is enriched by a number of humorous stories that have very little correlation with the main theme. This type of story telling can be found in various other works from the author and is somehow characteristic of him.

Also interesting is the subject of focus in Jerome's works. The author turned his attention to everyday life where he was able to see the witty side of it and profit from it.

III. 1. Technical development and its effects on the society and everyday life

Nineteenth century Great Britain was the world's leading empire. England, the empire's richest country, was a technological, scientific and economic superpower. From today's perspective, the nineteenth century may be marked as a progressive era in various fields of interest. New discoveries in natural sciences along with relatively large amount of inventions certainly and quite obviously had their influence on society. The aim of this chapter is to outline everyday life of English society towards the end of the nineteenth century and exemplify some of the major social changes.

To illustrate Britain's position among other countries, one may look at the statistics. In 1880, the United Kingdom held 22,9 percent of the world's industrial production. The

second most powerful country of that time, the United States of America, held 14,7 percent. Two of the world's biggest empires were to switch their positions in the following twenty years, with the United Kingdom holding 18,5 percent of the world's industrial production in 1900, whereas the United States increased their production to 23,6 percent. Most historians impute this fact, among other reasons, to a growing population of the United States towards the end of the century. Britain, on the contrary, had to deal with emmigration of its inhabitants, especially into US. However, this trend was mainly attributed to Ireland and Scotland. England itself kept its dominant position within the empire and continued in its progress. (Wasson, 241)

Most of all, it was the steam engine that brought significant changes and which was of great importance to a diverse spectrum of economic areas. Transport and industry were transformed completely. Whereas at the beginning of the nineteenth century steam powered trains were rather rare and imperfect, in the second half of the century they became a common means of transport. In addition, the invention of dynamite and steam excavator enabled faster build up of the railways. By 1870 most cities had its own railway station. The developement of the rail track had many positive impacts. Firstly, railway companies offered a wide range of jobs to thousands of people, from diggers and workers who contributed to the constructions of the tracks to the clerks that dealt with administrative and financial responsibilities of the companies. Secondly, at the same time, it made the trading faster and cheaper. Factory owners and large scale businessmen appreciated railway's lower costs. Ordinary people were able to buy organic products such as vegetables or meat while it was still fresh thanks to quick delivery. The distribution of the daily press was another novelty that would not have been possible just several decades earlier. The success of the railway companies also attracted many investors, from rich businessmen to ordinary people who invested their savings in the belief that they would profit from the interest. This one fact boosted Britain's economy. Train components for example were made in large numbers and became one of Britain's main exports.

Besides the economic influence of the railway, one may also easily identify the social effects that it brought with it. As mentioned before, people were able to buy fresher food which in turn improved overall health conditions for instance. Another major change was the

unification of time in order to stick with the time schedule of arriving and departing trains. What is seen today as natural and essential, was actually not necessary until the development of the railways in earlier decades. Local time could differ from region to region because people travelled around the country rather sporadically and to nearby areas mainly. However, this changed with thicker railway tracks and affordable prices of fare tickets. Even the working class could travel by train every day in order to get to work. People were now able to work and live in two different areas, which used to be inconceivable. Typically, they worked in the cities where the most of the factories were situated and lived either in the suburbs or in the country. The railway was a phenomenon that united England's regions. As presented by D. J. Olsen in *The Growth of Victorian London* (1979): "Railway along with the telegraph turned England into one big city or at least into one huge urbanized area." (Wasson, 235)

Nevertheless, transport with trains and steam boats was not the only domain of the steam engine. Steam-based machines started to be widely used in factories. The factories therefore became more productive and effective. As already mentioned, factories were situated mainly in the cities or nearby areas. The need for a job lured thousands of people into cities which in turn became terribly overcrowded. Manchester, for instance, had about 303 000 inhabitants in the mid-nineteenth century and over a million at the beginning of the twentieth century. (Wasson,248) Life conditions of the working classes got better towards the end of the nineteenth century thanks to several government measures. These acts decreased the working hours and limited the labour of children. Huge social differences between the classes were still present however, and up to ten percent of the population remained very poor with incomes that did not even cover the basic necessities.

III. 2. Socialism

The nineteenth century is an extremely interesting period of history when looking back in time from our present point. Technical development along with the Industrial Revolution brought considerable changes to society. Even today, these changes project into everyday life of ordinary people. New political parties and movements were introduced to the scene as well. One of these such movements was socialism. Socialism became an often discussed yet controversial topic not only among intellectuals but also among the working classes. Opinions on the idea of socialist society and its feasibility differ as will be presented later in the thesis when discussing the works of Jerome Klapka Jerome and Oscar Wilde. The aim of this chapter is to briefly describe the movement and its position in the English society in the nineteenth century.

The transition from an agricultural economy to industrial one sparked numerous changes to society. One of the most serious problems that needed to be addressed was poverty, especially among the working classes. What is sometimes referred to as a Labour Question became an urgent issue during the nineteenth century. Masses of manual laborers lived in very poor conditions with insufficient income to cover even their elementary needs. The indigent state of the working classes became the subject of debate between intellectuals and higher classes. In search of a solution to the problem, socialism seemed a possible option. If one considers the definition of the movement as described in the Oxford Dictionary: "A political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole."; it is not surprising that such an idea sounded promising to those who had suffered the dreads of starvation and fatigue. The crucial argument by socialists was that laborers should profit from their work more and should not allow themselves to be exploited. The tenets of socialism solved this problem by placing ownership on the means of production by the workers.

Although the ways people viewed Socialism differed, the main thoughts and goals of the ideology can be summed up into several points. These are: classless society, the absence of private property, equality and shared ownership of the means of production.

Socialists argue that society without private property leads towards elimination of competition. Since the means of production are owned by the labourers themselves, exploitation of any kind is impossible. Fulfillment of these conditions results in a classless society where equality comes to a natural bridge with the state of society.

The beginnings of British Socialism are linked to Robert Owen, a Welsh industrialist, thinker and social reformer who tried to improve the living conditions of his employees. Owen shortened the working hours, built schools and houses for his workers, and most importantly, changed the view of the society regarding the serious issue of child labour. Later on, Owen tried to place his opinions and beliefs into practice in his American Colony called New Harmony. Nevertheless, the project did not meet his expectations and was rather unsuccessful. Owen is therefore sometimes marked as an utopian socialist.

Several different concepts of Socialism were developed throughout the nineteenth century. Probably the most prominent one of these was represented by Christian Socialists, The Chartist Movement, Marxists and so called Lib-Labs which is a term used for collaboration between the Liberal Democrats and Labour Party.

Christian Socialists tried to implement traditional Christian ethics and morals into modern industrial life. "The term was generally associated with the demands of Christian activists for a social program of political and economic action on behalf of all individuals, impoverished or wealthy, and the term was used in contradistinction to laissez-faire individualism." (Britannica, Socialism) The laissez-faire individualism expressed the opinion that the economic issues and trade should function with very little or no intervention of the government. Although Christian Socialists primarily formed and operated during the second half of the century, their ideology inspired a number of Christian Socialist organizations which were formed in the last two decades of the century.

The Chartist Movement was slightly more radical. Its name comes from People's Charter, a petition with demands that the working classes handed to the government, a petition that apparently gained up to six million signatures. Although its leaders marked the movement as peaceful, the movement's activities lead to mass meetings and demonstrations. As Stephen Roberts from the University of Birmingham states "The

authorities had viewed this campaign with great concern, and some of the propertied classes had come to believe that the Chartists intended revolution." (Roberts) Due to government reprisals and inner disagreements, the movement did not last long. However, some of their demands were put into force. For instance, one of these is the reduction of the working hours to ten a day in 1847.

Marxism is another concept of Socialist principles that gained popularity in England but interestingly did not gain the same attention to its other European country counterparts. The first nominally Marxist organisation was the Social Democratic Federation, founded in 1882. (Diniejko) The party soon split up which led to the development of new ones with the Socialist Party of Great Britain being probably the most prominent one. Liberal-Labour or Lib-Labs formed in 1874 when the Liberal Democrats and Labour party agreed on mutual collaboration.

IV. 1. Major social changes towards the end of the nineteenth century

Other economic areas were also transformed in addition to industry, especially in the field of services. Banks and insurance companies formed a considerable part of the English economy and offered job opportunities to thousands of people. The most prominent ones of these, such as Barclay's or Lloyd's, retain their position on the market until the present day. Bank clerks, insurance agents and other officials along with doctors and lawyers formed new middle-classes. With new urban society, the appearance of cities also changed. The cities of the early nineteenth century were rather untidy and neglected, as described by Tim Lambert, an English historian: "However early 19th century cities were dirty, unsanitary and overcrowded. In them streets were very often unpaved and they were not cleaned. Rubbish was not collected and it was allowed to accumulate in piles in the streets. Since most of it was organic when it turned black and sticky it was used as fertilizer." The cities of the late nineteenth century took a turn for the better: "In the late 19th century most cities dug sewers and created piped water supplies, which made society much healthier." (Lambert) Implementing these crucial, life-improving innovations was possible only due to

technological progress. New inventions made manual labour much easier, the greatest impact of which was the steam engine.

IV. 2. Leisure time activities

Most of the population also reached sufficient income to cover their needs. Thanks to shorter working hours on Saturday, lower classes could even enjoy some spare time during weekends. The ways people spent their free time differed between the classes. Aristocracy played polo or hunted wild animals. The middle classes were keen on tennis, bridge or rowing, and the working class fell in love with football, which was to quickly subjugate social differences and become the national entertainment of the following century. Sport in general was well received and became a hobby for the masses. It is around this time one professional sports clubs were born. Thanks to daily press, people were able to follow their favorite team's results. While tennis and cricket were mainly in England, football spread its popularity across the whole United Kingdom. Many well known football clubs to this day were established in the second half of the century. Sport also became an opportunity for people to identify with their region and compete with others which gave people a sense of pride and identity. In fact most sports, with the exception of basketball and volleyball, were invented in England.

Sport was definitely not the only choice one had when it came to free time. The turn of the century left England with a very rich cultural scene. English music, theatre and literature produced masterpieces that are still with us today. Crucial part played so called Education Act which was put into force in 1870. This measure had the effect of a compulsory school attendance. Thanks to better life conditions, more people were able to gain at least the basic education and were therefore literate and as a result interest in literature increased. English authors were extremely productive during the second half of the nineteenth century. Many works from this era became classics, the real gems of literature.

In short, the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may be marked as a progressive era that brought numerous positive changes into the English society. On the other hand, several threats, such as poverty or war which was looming, still remained.

V. Jerome's Satire on Socialism

Jerome observed, reflected and often mocked the world and society around him. Most of his short stories and novels are based on true experiences, although often somewhat exaggerated. In order to lighten his prose, Jerome frequently puts his observations at an hyperbolized level, while still providing the reader with useful and worthy remarks on the society of the time.

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the nineteenth century brought numerous changes to society as a result of technical progress. Not only were machines and factories upgraded and improved, but also ostensibly unimportant trifles were brought to the marketplace which could be used in everyday life which eventually became very important to the average person. Novelties such as bicycles, umbrellas or toothbrushes were mass produced and therefore affordable and common, at least within middle classes for the first time.

Jerome's spectrum of interest was very wide indeed. From the above mentioned things of everyday use to global political movements, he observed it all. Although his focus often skips from one thing to another, even within one short story, his way of story telling remains the same in most of his works. His style was humorous with common hyperboles, yet frank and straightforward when it comes to expressing his views and opinions. Only few works of his, such as *All Roads Lead to Calvary* or *Paul Kever* differ from the rest, mainly because of the absence of humour and more serious themes.

The above mentioned points may be found in concrete examples from Jerome's prose. The Industrial Revolution caused considerable changes but unfortunately did not solve the problem with huge differences between classes. The idea of a new order through socialism spread quickly and its popularity, especially among lower classes, increased.

Significant change came with the Representation of People Act, often referred to as the Third Reform Act, in 1884: "...roughly two-thirds of adult males in England and Wales, three-fifths in Scotland and half in Ireland were entitled to vote in parliamentary elections." (Briggs) Supporters of socialism were therefore armed with the possibility of affecting the distribution of political power. Although the Independent Labour Party, which is considered to be the most prominent socialist party in England, was not established until 1893, people were aware of the movement even in the preceding years, as the following example will show.

Jerome reflects upon socialism in his story called *The New Utopia* (1891). As the title itself hints, Jerome was sceptical about socialists. As usual, the author criticizes the matter through mocking remarks and humour. What he sees as the main problems with socialism is the idea of the equality of man and the majority actually becoming the ruling power.

In the story, Jerome listens to his friends talking about principles of socialism. Later he goes home and falls asleep. As he sleeps, he dreams about society during the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, where all principles of equality were put into practise. It is in this story, where Jerome's affection for exaggeration is well demonstrated. As Jerome, who the main protagonist of the story walks around the city with his guide, he repeatedly asks him questions about the new world order. He finds out that in order to be equal, everybody has to have the same hair color, that names do not exist and are replaced by numbers and that many things, including art or marriage, are prohibited. Everything is decided by the majority. When Jerome asks his guide why art was prohibited, the answer goes as follows: "... such things tended to undermine the principles of equality. They made men think, and the men that thought grew cleverer than those that did not want to think; and those that did not want to think naturally objected to this, and being in THE MAJORITY, objected to some purpose." (Jerome, Utopia)

Klapka was sometimes criticized for his humour being vulgar or morbid. As the writer remarked for the Penny Illustrated Paper in 1913: "Prior to that event, (*Paul Kever* novel being published) I was often abused as a sort of literary hooligan, and my works were occasionally spoken of as insults to literature." (Oulton) An example of a somewhat controversial writing may also be found in the story, again on the subject of socialists and

the idea of equality. Jerome's guide says to him: "Yes; when a man is much above the average size and strength, we cut one of his legs or arms off, so as to make things more equal; we lop him down a bit, as it were. Nature, you see, is somewhat behind the times; but we do what we can to put her straight. " (Jerome, *Utopia*)

As one can see, Jerome's views regarding some of the basic principles of socialism were quite unflattering. Given the author's working class origin, one would expect a different approach to the ideology, as most of the working class were pro-socialist. However, it is obvious from this textual evidence, that the author was able to foresee the possible totalitarian conception of the ideology, where people are losing their elementary rights in the name of equality. It was clear that Jerome did not forget his origin as the life of the poor was often a point of his focus. Nevertheless, he did not perceive socialism as a viable way to get away from poverty and inequality.

VI. The English and Other Nations

Jerome's perception of the English is slightly ambiguous. In his prose one may find examples of both national pride, as well as criticism of the nation. Nevertheless, the latter of the two applies mainly to the English society of Jerome's time. When it came to historical events that were of high importance for the English, the author stands by his nation. Although he often mocked the citizens of his native country, he proved his strong devotion towards England when he voluntarily joined the army during the First World War, even after he was considered too old for the service. To hammer the point, Jerome was proud to be English, but was not a such a blind nationalist that he could not also discern the faults of his country.

Jerome outlined his opinion on English relations to other countries in his satirical essay called *Why We Hate the Foreigner* (1905). The author opens the essay with the following line: "The advantage that the foreigner possesses over the Englishman is that he is born good." (Jerome, *Foreigner*) In the essay he compares some behavioral patterns of the English and continental Europeans in everyday life. Whereas the rest of Europeans seem to obey rules and laws, the English, according to Klapka, do not. The obedience of the Englishmen, or Britons in general, seemed to come to Jerome's mind relatively often. For

instance, in his comic novel, *Three Men on the Bummel* (1900), Jerome stated: "The healthy Briton takes his pleasure lawlessly, or it is no pleasure to him. Nothing that he may do affords to him any genuine satisfaction. To be in trouble of some sort is his only idea of bliss." (314) Jerome then provides the reader with his own experiences with such behaviour. At the end of the essay he presents his belief that even animals born on English soil are rebellious and tells a story about a dog which caused an accident in France. The author then concludes: "I learnt from the young lady that he was an English-born fox-terrier. That allusion explained everything. The foreign dog does not do this sort of thing. The foreigner is born good: that is why we hate him." (Jerome, Foreigner)

On the contrary, Jerome treated England and its history with great respect. His depiction of the English land and its beautiful nature are described with carefully chosen words and almost poetic tinge. The same can be said regarding his attitude towards glorious moments of British history. In *Three Men in a Boat* the author switches from time to time apart from his usual way of writing to somewhat more noble tone: "Dear old Quarry Woods! With your narrow, climbing paths, and little winding glades, how scented to this hour you seem with memories of sunny summer days! How haunted are your shadowy vistas with the ghosts of laughing faces! How from your whispering leaves there softly fall the voices of long ago! " (131) and he often lets his fantasy flow and describes historic events as if they were just happening. For instance, the signing of Magna Charta is in chapter eleven of the same book.

Jerome travelled a lot and picked up some interesting facts and observations about other countries, among which is Germany which proves to be the most discussed one. Klapka was to the country several times as a tourist and was fascinated by the Germans for a plethora of reasons.

First, unlike the English, Germans were disciplined and respectful towards orders and regulations. Jerome illustrates this essential difference between the two nations in *Three Men on the Bummel*. As usual, he explains these distinct approaches towards obedience in a humorous way, using dogs as an example: "In England, when we want to keep dogs out of places, we put up wire netting, six feet high, supported by buttresses, and defended on the top by spikes. In Germany, they put a notice-board in the middle of the place, "Hunden verboten," and a dog that has German blood in its veins looks at that notice-board and walks

away." (321) On one hand, Jerome admired German obedience, but on the other he realized that such dedication to commands may lead towards certain narrow-mindedness, with which he also encountered.

Secondly, Jerome perceived Germany as a progressive country. Germans were, in the words of the author, "in many matters ahead of us (Englishmen)." (285) It was, for instance, the perfect infrastructure of German cities and their orderlines that Jerome praised. Public transport in Germany was, in his opinion, way ahead of the English and much better organized. Cities were also cleaner than those in England due to German's strict law on the scattering of rubbish on the streets. The German education system was also described as more advanced than the English one: "and in the matter of common sense, as applied to education, they can give us ninety-nine in a hundred and beat us with one hand." (277) Jerome's affection towards Germany proved itself in 1900 when he moved to Dresden where he lived with his family for two years.

Unfortunately, it was around this time, when English-German relations grew cold. Britons were involved in a war conflict called the Boer War. The conflict had two periods. The earlier is called The First Boer War and lasted only one year, from 1880 to 1881. The conflict arised when British troops tried to annex Transvaal in the south of Africa, in order to gain access to its gold deposits. Britain however lost the war and had to accept Boers' independence.

The Second Boer War lasted from October 1889 until May 1902 and was won by the British. The conflict was of course more complicated and would need deeper analysis, but that is not in the interest of this thesis. What was crucial for further developement of English-German relations was the reaction of the German emperor, Wilhelm II, with regard to the British failure in the First Boer War. Wilhelm II sent a telegram to Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger, the president of the Transvaal Republic, in which he expressed pleasure over Briton's defeat. The telegram read as follows: "I express to you my sincere congratulations that you and your people, without appealing to the help of friendly powers, have succeeded, by your own energetic action against the armed bands which invaded your country as disturbers of the peace, in restoring peace and in maintaining the independence of the country against attack from without." (Britannica, Telegram) Jerome reflects this telegram in his autobiography, *My Life and Times*: "It was the Kaiser's telegram that turned the wind. I

was in Germany at the time, and feeling was high against the English." (276) As Jerome mentions, the telegram caused significant changes in German perception of the English and vice versa. In England the message was interpreted as if Germany actually offered military support to Transvaal in the case of another conflict. Some historians perceive the telegram as one of the crucial escalations of tensions which eventually led towards World War I. What is certain however, is that at the beginning of the twentieth century Germany replaced France as the most hated enemy of England. This problematic relation was not to become better even long after the end of World War II. In his biography Jerome claims, that at the time, the anti-German propaganda was huge in England and when the World War I was announced, he did not perceive it as a catastrophe. Nevertheless, it was German politics and government he disliked, not the ordinary Germans themselves: "If I knew and hated the German military machine, so likewise I knew, and could not bring myself to hate, the German people. I had lived among them for years. I knew them to be a homely, kind, good-humoured folk." (Jerome, *My Life*, 284)

Before Germany, England's archenemy was, of course, France. The author's personal experiences with the French were diverse. Jerome illustrates French perception of the English in his biography. As he was walking around a small town in the south of France, a little boy accompanied him. Then his mother ran out of the house and screamed: "Mon Dieu! To promenade here in the heat for pleasure! You must surely be Monsieur the Devil himself. Or else an Englishman." (199) There was a certain tension between the two nations towards the end of the nineteenth century, mainly because of their shared interest in African colonies. Eventual war with France was discussed in journals and magazines very often.

This uncertain political situation probably inspired Jerome for his novel *All Roads Lead to Calvary* (1919). This story of a young journalist, Joan, is very different from the rest of Jerome's writings. Unlike most of his books, *All Roads Lead to Calvary* is not meant to be humorous whatsoever. It is in this book where Jerome depicts both, the English – French relations and the influence of the press on public opinion. In the novel Joan, who is English, works as a correspondent from France. She has to undergo the anti-English mood of the country and deal with many moral dilemmas. On one occasion she is present at a music hall performance, where England is abused: "Joan's patience was sorely tested. She had to listen

with impassive face to coarse jests and brutal gibes directed against England and everything English; to sit unmoved while the vast audience rocked with laughter at senseless caricatures of supposed English soldiers whose knees always gave way at the sight of a French uniform." (Jerome, *Calvary*) Although Jerome invented this particular event, one has no doubts that such performances existed on both sides, English or French.

Fortunately, England and France divided their sphere of influence in Africa and peace was kept. Both countries realized the growing military potential of Germany and knew that their mutual cooperation may be needed soon. However serious the situation was, with the exception of *All Roads Lead to Calvary*, Jerome's remarks on the French are still more amusing rather than offensive or hurtful.

As mentioned before, Klapka was not one of those who could be marked as a blind nationalist. On the contrary, he was able to see the ridiculous side of being too patriotic. In *Three Men on the Bummel* Jerome describes a debate he had with his friends on whether or not a guillotine should be introduced into Britain: " 'It is so much neater, ' said Harris. - 'I don't care if it is, ' said George; 'I'm an Englishman; hanging is good enough for me. ' " (Jerome, *Bummel*, 278)

Besides Germany and France, Jerome visited numerous other countries, including Belgium, Russia and United States. Nevertheless, these are mentioned mainly in his biography and are not further developed in other works. One may find some slight allusions on the above mentioned countries in Jerome's short stories and essays. For instance, in *Is the American Husband Made Entirely of Stained Glass?* he criticized the trend of separate living between American married couples which he encountered in Dresden. The husband usually stayed in the US while his wife with kids lived in Europe. However, these are very specific findings of Jerome's and can not be applied in general.

VII. Timelessness and Predictions

With the advantage of hindsight, one does not have to hesitate to underscore Jerome's work as everlasting. *Three Men in a Boat* itself garnered Jerome an undying fame and respect, although nor the author, nor the literary critics seem to know why. Some say, that it is the vulgarity and cheap humour of the book that is most attributable to its popularity. And while Klapka was somewhat annoyed of being associated with only one book, he defended his work against such statements. In a foreword to later editions of *Three Men in a Boat* he wrote: "Bad art may succeed for a time and with a limited public; it does not go on extending its circle throughout twenty years. I have come to the conclusion that, be the explanation what it may, I can take credit to myself for having written this book." (6) Time proved the truthfulness of Jerome's argument. In the above mentioned quotation one could replace "twenty years" for "a hundred and twenty years".

Jerome died in 1927 and therefore could not fully foresee the impact of his work. The book is nearing its 130th anniversary and is still read and enjoyed worldwide, even in the twenty-first century. Yet *Three Men in a Boat* is not the only timeless work of the author as postulated in this paper. Jerome's ability to choose the right themes and expand on them as well as his specific way of story telling, apply to his body of work in general. At his time, the author's writing was marked as "new humour" (Oulton), often with negative connotations, referring to its allegedly simple and vulgar style. Today's view on Jerome's prose would be more tolerant. First, the simplicity of Klapka's composition became an advantage. Although written in the nineteenth century, most of his books may be viewed as reader-friendly. Secondly, readers of our time hardly see anything vulgar about Jerome's prose. Finally, the author's humour really was new and, according to some critics, influenced a number of authors who may be traced to the present day. Robert McCrum of *The Guardian* wrote on Jerome's humour the following: "... a light comic prose whose influence can be detected later in the work of, among many, PG Wodehouse, James Thurber, Mark Haddon and Nick Hornby." (McCrum)

Although such judgements may be perceived as questionable, the truth is that Jerome's work is still present, still real, entertaining and popular. The question arises then, by what means did the author achieve the timelessness of his works?

To a certain extent, it is Klapka's ability to choose the right topics for his writing. The subjects of Jerome's works are often timeless themselves. Themes such as the weather, human vices, rules of unintended consequences or animals occur often in the author's prose. If one takes a brief look at the names of the chapters in *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, for instance, he/she will find, that all the above mentioned themes are included. Besides these, one may find chapters called *On Being in Love*, *On Eating and Drinking* or *On Memory*. As one can see, Jerome's selection of topics was very wise. A man will always eat and love under whatever circumstances he finds himself in. A reader will therefore always be interested in such writings and will be able to associate himself with the story. It seems that Jerome was well aware of this aspect.

His works often dealt with actual and fashionable themes that attracted a wide range of readers. *Three Men in a Boat* was originally supposed to be a travel guide for the river Thames, with focus on interesting historical information. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, rowing, sailing or in fact any kind of cruise down the river Thames during Jerome's time, was hugely popular primarily among the middle classes who also made up the majority of the population. The author's intention is therefore obvious. To author a piece of literature that would satisfy the reader's interest. Although Jerome transformed his original idea completely from a travel guide to a comic novel, the main theme of a cruise down the river remained the same. This was a very popular entertainment at the time and may be seen as at least one contributing factor towards the explanation of the book's success in the nineteenth century. It does not explain however, its ongoing popularity in the twenty first century. The same goes for the author's second most successful book *Three Men on the Bummel*. Again, Klapka used a sport that was gaining popularity among the masses, this time cycling, and again the book was a success. Cycling became a hobby for many at the time. The book was published in 1900, just three years before the first Tour de France. This may illustrate the popularity of the sport at the turn of the century. The book was also published in America under the name of *Three Men on Wheels*, which may indicate the publisher's intention to highlight the presence of the sport in the book. In short, Jerome had a talent to draw the reader's attention by choosing the right topics to write about that they could relate to.

Nevertheless, these types of sports and activities themselves would not attract many readers today, since dozens of books have been written on these and the popularity of them have changed. It is the author's inimitable way of story telling rather, and his ability to see the world of his time in a broader context that make his works worthy and timeless. The author was capable of perceiving himself and the society of his time as a part of a continuous timeline or, in another words, as a part of history. He did not only reflect the past, but also tried to foresee the future. In *Three Men in a Boat*, for instance, he considers the things of everyday use of his time to be tasteless in comparison to the ones of their predecessors'. Jerome then expresses the opinion that this process keeps repeating over and over again. He illustrates his thought on a china dog, a certain ceramic decoration he has at home. Jerome sees the dog as useless, stupid and simply awful. "But in 200 years' time ", he wrote, "it is more than probable that that dog will be dug up from somewhere or other, minus its legs, and with its tail broken, and will be sold for old china, and put in a glass cabinet." (59) Klapka than uses his typical humouristic approach with a touch of irony and continues: "In 2288 people will gush over it (the dog). The making of such dogs will have become a lost art. Our descendants will wonder how we did it, and say how clever we were. We shall be referred to lovingly as those grand old artists that flourished in the nineteenth century, and produced those china dogs. " (60)

As one can see, Jerome's view on the society of his time was rather somber instead of celebratory. It seems that the author realized that despite technological progress, which was considerable at his time, human nature remained unchanged. Human vices, such as greed, vanity or sloth were often mentioned in his writing, although not necessarily through a negative lens. Let us demonstrate this with the example of laziness, which is frequently discussed and presented almost as a virtue in his writings. In *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* Klapka not only appreciates idleness, but also provides the reader with advice and instructions in how to achieve it. "It is impossible to enjoy idling thoroughly unless one has plenty of work to do. There is no fun in doing nothing when you have nothing to do. Wasting time is merely an occupation then, and a most exhausting one. Idleness, like kisses, to be sweet must be stolen." (Jerome, *Idle Thoughts*) As it is obvious from the example above, Jerome did not only criticize the society but he observed it, and often identified with it. Although he was also critical, he never went overboard with is criticism. On the contrary, he

presented himself as a *part* of the society he described, not merely as an outside observer. Jerome did not make a border between the reader and himself and when he mocked something, he often added some story of his own or his relatives in order to personalize it. This is seen in *Three Men in a Boat* and *Three Men on the Bummel*, where Jerome depicts his experiences with his Uncle Podger.

To sum up, it is the author's choice of themes, his ability to perceive these in a broader context, his entertaining way of story telling, and his specific humour that make his work timeless.

As already stated, the author often asked himself questions on further development of things around him. From trivialities, as above mentioned decoration of the china dog and its future perception, to more serious affairs, such as politics or global movements of different kinds. Jerome often made predictions based on his observation of the subject and was remarkably successful in foreseeing the future. The best examples of such predictions may be found in *Three Men on the Bummel*, a book based on Jerome's travelling experiences. Klapka was indeed a very perceptive voyager. He noted the habits and behaviour of other nations and compared and contrasted them to those of his own. Since most of the story takes place in Germany, its inhabitants are in Klapka's greatest interest. Jerome's observation of the Germans was already stated earlier in the thesis. However, his findings led him towards an interesting conclusion: "Of the Germans you might say they are a people who will go anywhere, and do anything, they are told." (384) After this statement the author depicts his personal experience with German affection towards the government and commands and then warns: "Hitherto, the German has had the blessed fortune to be exceptionally well governed; if this continue, it will go well with him. When his troubles will begin will be when by any chance something goes wrong with the governing machine." (385) In other words, Jerome was able to see the dangerous potential hidden in the German nature, which led towards global catastrophe some thirty years onwards which is truly remarkable.

VIII. Oscar Wilde on Socialism

This part of the thesis is dedicated to a comparison of Jerome's writings to those of his contemporaries. The chapter focuses mainly on the content side of the works. Since the main goal of this section is to present Jerome Klapka Jerome's postulations and opinions, concrete examples were chosen according to their topics rather than style. The first subject to be further elaborated upon is the idea of socialism and the socialist movement. Jerome's view on the matter was presented earlier in the thesis. His views are now to be compared with those of Oscar Wilde, who commented the subject in his essay *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891).

An interesting fact is that both works, Jerome's *New Utopia* as well as Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, were published in the very same year, 1891. This suggests that socialism was an often discussed and controversial topic at the time. This controversy is very apparent in the works that are to be compared. Although Jerome and Wilde differ in their opinions on the movement in general, one may spot several interesting parallels between the two works.

As it is obvious from the title of Jerome's short story, the author perceived the idea of socialism as utopian and impractical. Wilde realized the utopian nature of socialism as well, but did not view it as a problem in the way Jerome did. On the contrary, Wilde stated: "A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias." (Wilde, *The Soul*) It is evident that Wilde's approach towards socialism is far more tolerant, liberal and philosophical than that of Klapka's. This may be explained by the origin of both authors. While Klapka grew up in a working-class family, Wilde was brought up in intellectual circles and was surrounded with well educated people. Oscar Wilde can be seen as an intellectual socialist who believed in the the movement. Klapka, on the other hand, was more pragmatic and sceptical of it. Nevertheless, both authors were well aware of the possible misuse of the ideology. Questioning of the ruling power in a socialist society is discussed in *The New Utopia* as well as in *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*. In the prior

writing mentioned, Klapka works with the idea of the majority as the ruling power. He sees it as one of the main problems with socialism. The quotations from *The New Utopia* that are stated earlier in the thesis imply that Jerome was more than cynical towards socialism. As implied in *The New Utopia*, the rule of the majority may very easily turn into the rule of the rabble. Wilde goes even further than that when he states that in a socialist society no kind of authority should be present and highlights the importance of the individual: "What is needed is Individualism. If the Socialism is Authoritarian; if there are Governments armed with economic power as they are now with political power; if, in a word, we are to have Industrial Tyrannies, then the last state of man will be worse than the first." (Wilde, *The Soul*) As one can see, socialism in the eyes of Oscar Wilde demands no ruling power at all. During the whole work Wilde puts emphasis on the importance of a man being an individual. He criticizes the blind following of the masses and states that individuality has nothing to do with one's property or power. As an example Wilde uses Jesus Christ who did not possess anything yet became a leviathan of an individual. Wilde then criticizes the poor for doing work they do not like for minimum wage. It is, in his eyes, their own fault. Since they are being used they are losing their humanity. An individual should be strong enough to rebel against such exploitation. In many ways Wilde's vision of socialism narrowly borders with anarchy: "I must say that it was high time, for all authority is quite degrading. It degrades those who exercise it, and degrades those over whom it is exercised. When it is violently, grossly, and cruelly used, it produces a good effect, by creating, or at any rate bringing out, the spirit of revolt and Individualism that is to kill it. When it is used with a certain amount of kindness, and accompanied by prizes and rewards, it is dreadfully demoralising." (Wilde, *The Soul*)

Art and its part in socialist society is another issue that both authors surmised about. Both Klapka and Wilde saw art as no matter of small importance. Both authors realized that art as a form is an elementary tool for expressing one's self. However, freedom of art may come into a conflict with the ideology of socialism which prefers equality and unity rather than expression of an individual. In *The New Utopia* Jerome describes a society in which art is prohibited completely for "such things tended to undermine the principles of equality." Wilde uses society as an example of how public opinion can have a bad influence on art. As mentioned before, Wilde paid great respect towards individuality. An independent artist is,

in his opinion, a perfect individual. What Wilde criticizes is the tendency of some to let themselves be manipulated through the public opinion. Such artists do art for a consuming public rather than for art itself. "In a word, it comes from that monstrous and ignorant thing that is called Public Opinion, which, bad and well-meaning as it is when it tries to control action, is infamous and of evil meaning when it tries to control Thought or Art." (Wilde, *The Soul*)

What is also interesting is the different approaches the two authors took regarding art. While *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* is meant as a serious and critical essay, Klapka's *The New Utopia* may be perceived as a short story with comic elements. Such attitude is typical and characteristic of Jerome. His work is full of exaggeration, original similes and humor even when discussing serious matters. Although Jerome's *The New Utopia* is purely anti-socialist and Wilde's essay rather pro-socialist, both authors were aware of the imperfections of socialism. The crucial difference between the two, however, comes with the question of feasibility. While Oscar Wilde sees socialism as practicable with an emphasis on the needs of an individual, Jerome sees the whole concept of socialism simply as utopian which proved to be true up until now.

IX. Robert Louis Stevenson on the English

Jerome's observations of English society and their general nature play a considerable role in his work. Although he knew very well the weaknesses of the English, such as the fact that they show very little respect towards obeying the rules or authority in the broader sense, his remarks are generally those of a man who loved his country and could therefore be challenged as biased. Jerome's perception of the English will now be compared and contrasted against the opinions of his famous contemporary Robert Louis Stevenson in order to gain a wider perspective on the subject matter.

Since Stevenson was a Scotsman, his observations give the reader the possibility of encountering the text with the insight of a foreigner. The word foreigner itself is of vital importance when discussing the views of Stevenson in fact. Even though Scotland and England are neighbouring countries and the key constituents of the greatest empire in the

world at the time, the author did not perceive the English and Scots as one nation whatsoever. His collection of essays named *Memories and Portraits* (1887) opens with a chapter titled *The Foreigner At Home*. The whole chapter is devoted to comparisons between the two nations with a specific emphasis on the English attitude towards their northern neighbours and foreign countries in general. Stevenson was aware of the diverse character of the United Kingdom: "It is not only when we cross the seas that we go abroad; there are foreign parts of England; and the race that has conquered so wide an empire has not yet managed to assimilate the islands whence she sprang." (Stevenson, *Memories*)

Taking the chapter as a whole, one may easily come to the conclusion that Stevenson did not perceive this disunity of the kingdom in a positive manner. It is rather peculiar that what was of crucial importance for one author escaped the attention of the other. Indeed, Jerome wrote a lot about the English, but very little about the Britons. This may be seen as an insight into his mind that he perceived his homeland as a nation of its own rather than as a part of the United Kingdom. Stevenson, on the contrary, saw the United Kingdom as a whole but was aware of its fragmentation. He also offers an explanation for such a state of affairs. As the main reason he sees a certain superiority of the English: "In spite of these promptings to reflection, ignorance of his neighbours is the character of the typical John Bull. His is a domineering nature, steady in fight, imperious to command, but neither curious nor quick about the life of others ... But the Englishman sits apart, bursting with pride and ignorance." (Stevenson, *Memories*) As it is obvious from the citation above, Stevenson's view of the English was anything but flattering. His depiction of an Englishman gives an image of an arrogant, egotistic creature with no respect towards other nations. Also the name of John Bull, that the author uses, implies certain rudeness and recklessness. Although such judgements may seem a bit unfair and exaggerated one must consider the time in which *The Foreigner at Home* was written. Britannia ruled the world and England naturally profited from it. One cannot deny that the position of England within the empire was a privileged one. The position of its neighbours, however, was not so enjoyable as evidenced by a number of Scottish and Irish citizens who decided to emigrate with most of them heading either to England or to the new promised land of the United States, which were named as New England States by Stevenson interestingly enough.

Nevertheless, Jerome's view of his nation was the complete opposite to that of Stevenson's. In *Three Men on a Bummel* he states: "We English are always sneering at ourselves, and patriotism in England is regarded as a stamp of vulgarity." (Jerome, *Bummel*, 301) As one can see, the views of the two authors could hardly differ more. The question arises whether it was Jerome or Stevenson who was closer to the real state of the matter. Were the English proud of themselves or rather sceptical about their own qualities? The truth lies somewhere in between surely. Stevenson had no mercy with the English superiority and claimed the nation as being ignorant towards others. Such an argument can be easily doubted only by the work of Jerome itself without further research. As presented earlier in the thesis Jerome had a good notion of other countries and was able to appreciate their beauties. His remarks on the Germans, the French or even the Czechs prove he was definitely not ignorant towards other nations. On the other hand, Klapka hardly made any observations about Scotland or the Scots. As the present day shows a very simplistic argument can be made that Scotland is being neglected by their English neighbours, and that Stevenson was probably correct in his interpretations. Also on the question regarding English admiration of the English, one feels correct in agreeing with Stevenson, although such admiration does not necessarily lead to contempt of others. Jerome loved his homeland which is hardly a thing one could criticize. As he wrote in his short story titled *Malvina of Brittany* (1916): "The proper thing to do was to say good-bye with a laugh and a jest, start up his machine and be off to England—dear old practical, merry England, where he could get breakfast and a bath."

Both authors also commented on the English language and its diverse accents and dialects. On this subject, their opinions relatively correspond with each other. Jerome foresaw the potential of English to become the world's language. What he saw as an obstacle of happening so was the tricky pronunciation of the language. So did Robert Louis Stevenson: "You may go all over the States, and - setting aside the actual intrusion and influence of foreigners, negro, French, or Chinese - you shall scarce meet with so marked a difference of accent as in the forty miles between Edinburgh and Glasgow, or of dialect as in the hundred miles between Edinburgh and Aberdeen." (Stevenson, *Memories*)

Given the vastness of the British empire at the time, one may not be surprised at the variety of remarks or perceptions of its citizens. The aim of this section was to offer a different view on the subject matter other than that of an Englishman and to spot the diversity between the two. As one can see, both authors had their own views, and surely both of them slightly distorted and biased.

X. Conclusion

The main task of this thesis was to present the work of Jerome Klapka Jerome in a different way than it is usually perceived. In other words, to prove that Klapka was not only a humorist, but also a great observer whose findings and remarks about his time offer an interesting view of the English society towards the end of the nineteenth century. This assumption was supported by several predictions that Jerome made which actually proved to come true.

The theoretical part of the thesis introduced some historical facts and peculiarities of the author's time. These were chosen with respect to the subjects in his body of work. The chapter on technological development and its effects on everyday life portrayed the impact of Industrial Revolution on English society for example. A considerable part of the theoretical section was devoted to the English, England, and The English perception of other countries, especially France and Germany, since both countries had very tense relations with England at the time. Another issue of great relevance regarding Jerome's work that was discussed in the first part of the thesis was socialism. The theory of socialism and its elementary principles were briefly presented along with different concepts of the theory.

The practical part of the thesis expanded upon what was mentioned in the theoretical part but through the prism of Jerome Klapka Jerome's writing. Relevant citations from the author's works were chosen in order to present Klapka's views and opinions even to a reader who does not know his work well, if at all. The first section of the practical part was Jerome's view on socialism. From the quoted parts of the text, it should be obvious that the author's attitude towards the movement was very sceptical or even sarcastic. It is in this section that one could observe Jerome's characteristic sense of humor which could even go

so far as to be seen as morbid, as well as his inclination for exaggeration. Another issue that was extensively described in the practical part was the author's observations of the English and his comparison of English nature with that of other nations, especially Germans. Jerome expressed the idea that one of the main differences between the two nations was the willingness to obey the rules and authority. While Germans were disciplined, in Jerome's opinion, the English were presented as anything but. The author's view of socialism was compared with that of Oscar Wilde's and his remarks about the English were contrasted with those of Robert Louis Stevenson in the latter part of the section as well.

To conclude, the goal of this thesis was to present Jerome Klapka Jerome's work in a somewhat new light and to prove that the author's contribution to literature was much more nuanced than perhaps only his popular works might show. To accomplish this, analysis of his lesser known body of work was examined as well. This thesis proves that besides his gentle humour, Jerome can offer the reader an interesting record of his time and provide timeless insights about life in general. In short, Jerome should be perceived and celebrated not only as a humorist but as a complex author.

XI. Works Cited

Briggs, Asa: *Reforming Acts*

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/reforming_acts_01.shtml

Diniejkó, Andrzej: *The Social Democratic Federation*

<http://www.victorianweb.org/history/socialism/sdf.html> accessed 18th April 2015.

Encyclopaedia Britannica: *Christian Socialism*

<http://www.britannica.com/topic/Christian-Socialism> accessed 3rd July 2015

Encyclopaedia Britannica: *Kruger Telegram*

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/323889/Kruger-telegram> accessed 7th April 2015.

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *All Roads Lead to Calvary* (1919)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2231/2231-h/2231-h.htm>

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *Malvina of Brittany* (1916)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2023/2023-h/2023-h.htm>

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *My Life and Times* (1926)

<http://www.gutenberg.ca/ebooks/jeromejk-mylife/jeromejk-mylife-00-h-dir/jeromejk-mylife-00-h.html>

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *The Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* (1905)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/849/849-h/849-h.htm>

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *The New Utopia* (1891)

<http://www.libertarian.co.uk/lapubs/cultn/cultn014.pdf>

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *They and I* (1909)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2437/2437-h/2437-h.htm>

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *Three Men in a Boat* (1889)

http://www.gasl.org/refbib/Jerome_3_Men.pdf

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *Three Men on the Bummel* (1900)

http://www.gasl.org/refbib/Jerome_3_Men.pdf

Jerome Klapka, Jerome: *Why We Hate the Foreigner* (1905)

<http://www.online-literature.com/jerome/idle-ideas/21/>

Lambert, Tim: *Daily Life in 19th Century Britain*

<http://www.localhistories.org/19thcent.html> accessed 10th March 2015.

McCrum, Robert: *Summer voyages: Three Men in a Boat by Jerome K Jerome*

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/jul/16/three-men-boat-jerome-k-jerome> accessed 25th March 2015.

Oxford Dictionaries: *Socialism*

<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/socialism> accessed 3rd July 2015.

Roberts, Stephen: *The Chartist Movement*

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/chartist_01.shtml accessed 6th July 2015.

Stevenson, Robert Louis: *Memories and Portraits* (1887)

<http://www.readbookonline.net/read/443/9893/>

The Jerome K Jerome Society: *Jerome the Man*

<http://www.jeromekjerome.com/jerome-in-words/jerome-the-man/>

Wasson, Ellis: *A History of Modern Britain: 1714 to the Present*. London: John Wiley & Sons: 2009

Wilde, Oscar: *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891)

<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/wilde-oscar/soul-man/>

W. de la L. Oulton, Carolyn: *Below the Fairy City: A Life of Jerome K. Jerome* (2012)

Kindle, eBook, edition 2012

